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Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities

Letter dated 18 January 2007 from the Chairman

Opening for signature of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will be open for signature by all States and by regional integration organizations at United Nations Headquarters in New York as from 30 March 2007.

Various colleagues have approached members of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities to enquire about the arrangements for the opening of the Convention for signature, and in particular whether there will be a ceremony associated with it.

In the absence of a consultative mechanism for the Convention during this transitional phase, members of the Bureau have consulted among themselves and with other colleagues on this matter.

Colleagues will be aware that it has been the practice to have signature ceremonies, attended by ministers and other high representatives, in respect of the opening for signature of significant conventions. An example is the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was opened for signature at United Nations Headquarters with an afternoon ceremony in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, attended by ministers and other high-level representatives. The Secretary-General presided over that event together with his Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Angela King, and a range of dignitaries took the floor prior to the actual signing. We are also aware of arrangements that are being made for a ceremony to be associated with the signature of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Given that this is the first comprehensive human rights convention adopted this millennium, that it potentially affects over 650 million persons with disabilities worldwide and that its development has involved an unprecedented level of input

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and engagement from civil society around the world, there is clearly a high level of interest in having a formal ceremony for the opening of the new Convention for signature on 30 March.

The Bureau has therefore requested the United Nations Secretariat (the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in conjunction with the Office of Legal Affairs) to proceed with arrangements for a formal signature ceremony at United Nations Headquarters on 30 March.

The purpose of the present letter is therefore to inform you of the arrangements that are being made.

I would therefore urge Governments to take the necessary steps to be able to sign the Convention at the ceremony on 30 March. I would also ask Governments to consider the possibility of being represented at that ceremony by ministers or other high-level participants, in keeping with the importance of the occasion and the significance of the new Convention.

(*Signed*) Don **MacKay**
Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive
and Integral International Convention on the Protection and
Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities